

Malvern hulks'; or sad because the priest in his dream jeered at Piers' pardon; or, on other occasions, 'witles nerehande (almost)'—'wo-werie and wetschod'—^eheavy-chered'. Only once is he wakened happily, by the pealing of the Easter bells. He can scourge mankind; he can exhort them; but when the fit is over, the dreamer's chin sinks brooding on his breast again.

Who was he, and what? About himself he tells us litde: others tell us less. In 1377 he speaks of his age as forty-five. 'Long Will' he calls himself, 'a moche (tall) man' and too lank to stoop at farm-labour; which is one reason for his avoiding it and taking the tonsure as a clerk of the lowest order in the Church. In that humble station he can marry; but, having married, he must be content to keep his station. His wife, we gather, is called Kitte, his daughter Kalote. Migrating from Malvern to Cornhill, he subsists by singing masses for the dead; also by begging invitations from the living; perhaps too by copying documents. For his father and friends had sent him to school and he speaks in the proud tone of one who knows, about accurate transcription. Happy monastery school!—it remains a heaven on earth in his way-worn memory:

In cloistre cometh no man • to chide ne to fighte,
But alle is buxumnesse (obedience) there • and
bokes to rede and
to lerne.

This regret is characteristic. He is one of those who find the adult world hard to cope with and sigh for their

happy nonage back again. But though
school-loving,
he is not learned. The curse of Reuben has
followed him
even there^'The (thee) were lef (you
would like) to
lerne' says Clergy reproachfully, 'but loth
for to stodie'.
He cannot resist sometimes a litde innocent
ostentation
of his culture—he could quote, if he liked,
so many
authorities in praise of poverty: